

Executive Summary

Are Disabled Peoples' Voices from both South and North Being heard in the Development process?

A Comparative analysis between the situation in South Africa, Zimbabwe, United Kingdom and Northern Europe

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Disability is a cross cutting issue. It involves every sector of society. Everyone should be aware of the needs of people with disabilities (PWD) and PWDs should be included in all development processes.

With this in mind the Disability KaR Programme commissioned a number research projects centred on disability issues. 'Are Disabled Peoples' Voices from Both South and North Being Heard in the Development Process' is one of the research topics. A Comparative analysis between the situation in South Africa, Zimbabwe and the United Kingdom and Northern Europe was undertaken by this research.

The research was undertaken from February 17 to end of June 2005. Four questionnaires for Governments, Donors, DPOs and DPs were designed and tested in South Africa and Zimbabwe. United Kingdom and Northern Europe had it own questionnaire, targeting DPOs only, and the literature on disability and disability policies of these countries was also reviewed.

Generally, in Zimbabwe and South Africa the development/ implementation of disability policies within government departments, at both national and provincial levels, are at a very early stage with the majority of departments/ municipalities having draft policies, or no policies at all. Where policies exist they are generally not backed up by funded strategies hence no meaningful implementation of these policies has occurred. Therefore, the voices of disabled people in the South are not heard and acted upon. In the North disabled people's voices are starting to be heard but more still needs to be done.

Most donors in Zimbabwe (67%) and South Africa (70%) indicated that they do not fund disability issues. Those funding disability issues are concerned with advocacy and human rights on a very small scale. The funding is small and comes with conditions. There are no donors targeting income-generating projects so as to empower people with disabilities. All donors 100% interviewed admitted that there is differences in ways disability issues are being handled. They suggested that all development processes should include people with disabilities. Their UK and Northern Europe counterparts echoed the same sentiments.

DPOs in both countries operate from ward to regional levels. Most of the DPOs rely on membership fees. Donors usually fund national and regional DPOs in both countries.

The survey documented that DPOs have good relationships with donors. Donors in Zimbabwe mostly fund advocacy and human rights. In South Africa most donors fund development work, human rights and leadership skills. The DPOs interviewed in UK and Northern Europe agreed that they have good relationships with the Southern DPOs, in terms of sharing information and experiences.

However, DPOs and DPs complained that donor funding came with conditions, and the funds are very small. The periods of funding range from one to three years and very few were funded for more than 10 years. Most of the DPOs interviewed in Zimbabwe and South Africa revealed that they give input on the funding proposals to donors from the developed countries. The donors usually have a partnership agreement with the corresponding country government and very few DPOs and DPs were requested to attend meetings, with some never being consulted. Then donors

just submitted a proposal and they were funded. The level of consultation in place is moderate 47% followed by high with 43%. The UK and Northern Europe also complained that the INGOs do their fundraising from International donors and governments using the knowledge of disabled people, who do not benefit in the end.

The most effective tactic mentioned for raising awareness of disability issues was to engage central and local government followed by discussing disability issues through the media. Writing papers for International forums and attending conferences and seminars were also mentioned as effective tactics being used by the DPOs in South Africa and Zimbabwe. UK and Northern European DPOs indicated that they were receiving feedback on newsletters from their Southern DPOs partners.

Southern DPOs complained that their northern partners do not involve them in the planning process and their concerns are not being addressed. They are asked for inputs on funding proposals and it seems the northern NGOs and INGOs use the southern DPOs since the former benefit more from these proposals as the bulk of the money goes to the northern NGOs/INGOs. At the same time the money comes with conditions such as the funds should not be used for administration purposes.

DPOs in South Africa and Zimbabwe felt that the Northern donors should empower the Southern DPOs. They should also influence donor agencies and governments to create a favourable environment for DPs. The Northern DPOs feel that more needs to be done in this area so as to empower the Southern DPOs.

The research revealed that there are major differences between the South and the North. The North provides devices for disabled persons and maintains high standards in disability. The South has weak Parliament Acts and much of the South does not have social security benefits.

The survey also documented that there are more females with disabilities than men in the sampled population in both countries. Their level of education is very low hence they are unable to be gainfully employed. Most of the DPs are in the active age group, which means they could contribute to their country's development. Even the Northern DPOs agreed that most disabled persons in the South do not have access to education compared to them.

Most of the DPs interviewed in Zimbabwe were not members of DPOs and do not network with other organisations. In South Africa, the majority of individuals interviewed belonged either to a local self-help group, forum, or DPO. Most of the DPs are from rural areas and living in abject poverty. Most of them depend on friends and relatives for a living. Very few are gainfully employed for example only a 1% employment equity target for people with disabilities was achieved in South Africa instead of the 2% target.

Some DPs are not affiliated to DPOs and they do not receive any meaningful assistance from their governments. Very few in Zimbabwe benefit from the government grants. In South Africa most the DPs are benefiting from the disability grants.

DPs indicated that their voices are not being heard as they are living in poverty. They do not want to be dependent. They want to be involved from the planning to implementation of disability programmes. DPs felt that government and DPOs should disseminate user-friendly information to rural areas and ensure that all types of disabilities are reached.

Most of DPOs (85%) in both countries are not happy with policies being put in place by the world bodies. It was disappointing to note that DPs are not aware of the UN Programmes in place such as the Africa Decade and the MDGs. They felt that their concerns could only be addressed if donors could target them directly. They also felt that they should be empowered by being engaged in income-generating projects; vocational training for adults, education for all, and the environment should be user-friendly for all types of disabilities. The Northern DPOs are aware of all the programmes.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in the light of the survey findings:

- a. Need to promote the inclusion, integration and human rights of disabled people through a variety of strategies that include the following:
 - Conducting advocacy activities that target politicians, senior management, and other decision-makers within government and civil society in order to create awareness, appreciation, and implementation of disability policies/legislation as part of the development process. Internal disability awareness work is recommended within government, and particularly municipalities, ultimately responsible for delivering services to people with disabilities.
 - Disability training at all levels of government based on more in depth analysis of the disabled people's and DPOs' needs in order to develop the required change in attitudes and competencies to effectively address disability issues.
 - Support the development and effective implementation of disability sensitive and inclusive policies and legislation.
 - Develop and implement systems and tools at all levels of government and appropriate civil society organisations in order to mainstream disability; and improve the monitoring, and evaluation of disability outputs/ indicators.
 - Increase access to, and dissemination of, information to DPs and DPOs on benefits that are conferred to people with disabilities by existing legislation.
 - Promote networking, inter-agency cooperation, and information sharing among government departments, donors, DPOs and DPs.
- b. DPOs should be given resources to implement activities and disseminate information on the African Decade for Person with Disabilities (1999 – 2009) and other policy instruments that enhance their engagement and participation in the development process.
- c. Donors should target Disabled Persons Organisations for support, particularly programmes and projects that enforce the rights of people with disabilities and development of grassroots initiatives that address poverty reduction, economic empowerment, and employment creation.

- d. Constructive partnership relationships should be forged between DPOs in the North/ South and with donors. As far as possible, funding should not come with unreasonable restrictions and conditions.
- e. DPs and DPOs should be fully involved in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes.
- f. Planning processes aimed at generating disability objectives, outputs and indicators relevant to the needs of people with disabilities be implemented with the active involvement of the disability movement.

